Thus, it is not possible to pay the price to the cotton growers in advance through MARK-FED.

CCI releases payments directly to farmers or to the commission agents within a period of 7 to 10 days. Some delay may occur due to non-receipt of bills from commission agents or delay in weighment in the current cotton season due to unprecedented and massive purchases under MSP operations but efforts have been made to release payments as quickly as possible.

Foodgrain Production

4659. SHRI R. KAMARAJ: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the foodgrain production to the year 2004-05 is estimated as 210.44 million tonnes against 213.46 million tonnes last year·

(b) if so, the reason for the shortfall;

(c) whether it is also a fact that Government have assessed the rabi prospects and discussed the strategies and plans for the coming kharif season including the input situation and budget position; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTI LAL BHURIA): (a) and (b) Yes Sir, The foodgrain production in 2004-05 is estimated at 210.44 million tonnes against 213.46 million tonnes last years. The reason of the decline is inadequate rainfall received during monsoon 2004. As compared to 2003, the southwest monsoon in 2004 was erratic with prolonged weak/break monsoon conditions prevailing during late June, most of July, late August and early September over different parts of the country. For the country as a whole, the seasonal rainfall from 1st June to 30th September was 87% of its Long Period Average (LPA). As a consequence the kharif foodgrain production in 2004-05 declined and is estimated at 104.08 million tonnes which is 12.8 million tonnes or 10.95% less than the corresponding Kharif production in 2003-04. However, the rabi production in 2004-05 is estimated at 106.36 million tonnes which is 9.78 million tonnes or 10.13% more than the corresponding production figure in 2003-04.

(c) and (d) The National Conference on Agriculture for Kharif Campaign 2005 was held on 22nd and 23rd March 2005 at New Delhi to assess the

Rabi Prospects for 2004-05 and to review preparation for kharif crops of 2005. The assessment of Rabi production done in the Conference has been mentioned above. In the Conference the Government underscored the importance of integrated efforts by Public and Private Institutions like Farmer's Associations, State Agricultural Universities, ICAR Institutes, for addressing the challenges confronting the Agriculture Sector. The Government has initiated steps to ensure increased credit flow to the rural sector and for higher investment in irrigation facilities and towards better resource conservation strategies. Stress has been given to higher seed replacement ratio for hybrid and high yielding varieties, setting up of more plant quarantine stations, and Agricultural Clinics aimed at promoting self employment of agricultural graduates, increased efforts in soil mapping for dry land rainfed areas and de-centralizing extension facilities at district and block leveis.

Regarding Agricultural inputs, like quality seeds, fertilizers etc. efforts are on to ensure their timely availability. Preventive measures to avoid outbreak of pests and diseases affecting crop production, suitable schemes to ensure adequate supply of Agricultural Credit to the farmers also have been initiated.

There is substantial increase in the budgetary allocation for Department of Agriculture & Cooperation in 2005-06 in comparison to 2004-05 as the plan outlay for annual plan 2005-06 is Rs. 4179.32 crores as compared to budget estimates of Rs. 2650.00 crores for 2004-05.

Assistance to Karnataka Veterinary Animal and Fisheries Sciences University

4660. SHRI K.B. KRISHNA MURTHY: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that the Karnataka Veterinary Animal and Fisheries Sciences University has been started during 2004-05 at Bidar in Karnataka; and

(b) if so, whether the Karnataka Government has sought any financial assistance for taking up research and other programmes besides providing infrastructure facilities at the new University?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTI LAL BHURIA): (a) Yes, Sir.